

individuals of eastern wahoo (*Euonymus atropurpureus*) are present; American trout lily (*Erythronium americanum* ssp. *americanum*) is literally abundant; and Virginia bluebells (*Mertensia virginica*) occurs in large clumps and is very showy when in bloom in early spring. The Significantly Rare eastern isopyrum (*Enemion biternatum*) is scarce here, but a small population was found during the inventory. Blending into the floodplain away from the levee is the Piedmont/Mountain Bottomland Forest. A Watch List species in this community is few-flower tick-trefoil (*Desmodium pauciflorum*). Other herbaceous plants of note in the floodplain forest include striped violet (*Viola striata*), cutleaf toothwort (*Cardamine concatenata*), one-flowered broomrape (*Orobanche uniflora*), and golden ragwort (*Senecio aureus*). In the floodplain are several Floodplain Pools (beaver ponds), one of which contains a nesting colony of great blue herons (*Ardea herodias*).

Slopes to the southeast of the floodplain are mostly mature Mesic Mixed Hardwood Forest. Northern red oak (*Quercus rubra*), white oak (*Q. alba*), tuliptree (*Liriodendron tulipifera*), and white ash (*Fraxinus americana*) are present here. Florida maple seedlings are abundant, and some hop-hornbeam (*Ostrya virginiana*) is present. The locally scarce eastern columbine (*Aquilegia canadensis*) grows in scattered places in the community.

The north side of the river has a much narrower floodplain, and slopes often come down to the river. One slope has a small example of the uncommon Basic Mesic Forest natural community; the locally scarce sicklepod (*Arabis canadensis*) and carpenter's-square figwort (*Scrophularia marilandica*) are present. One open slope/embankment next to the river contains the rare Godfrey's thoroughwort (*Eupatorium godfreyanum*).

The floodplain is an important wildlife area. An active nest of wild turkey (*Meleagris gallopavo*) was found on one survey, and the heronry was the only one located in the county during the inventory, though others might be present. The beaver ponds are important habitats for amphibians, and the northern gray treefrog (*Hyla versicolor*) was heard calling around the ponds on one or two occasions.

PROTECTION AND MANAGEMENT: The Progress Energy land is leased to the N.C. Wildlife Resources Commission for hunting and is part of the Hyco Game Land. Biologists at Progress Energy are aware of the significance of the tract, and one staff member was on one of the site visits. They hope to protect their portion of the natural area, and a registry agreement with the NC NHP may be the best protection strategy at the present time. The land north of the river is owned by private individuals, and conservation easements might be suitable, especially as the tracts lie along a major river and help protect water quality. The site needs no special management, and timber harvest is clearly detrimental, as exotic plants quickly invade rich soils such as present in the natural area. A few small ATV tracks are present on the north side, below the dam. It is hoped that such traffic remains close to the dam and western edge of the site.